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Best Development Practices Guidebook

BDP Guidebook

The Town has completed its **Best Development Practices Guidebook** (BDP Guidebook) with assistance from Daylor Consulting Group of Braintree. The BDP Guidebook is essentially a set of guidelines for developers and project reviewers intended to improve the quality of development in Franklin and to allow for a range of "creative" development practices.

The Guidebook describes the preferred design and construction practices in Franklin in the areas of stormwater management, site planning, erosion control, and landscape design. The Guidebook will be endorsed as official Town Policy, incorporated into the Town's Zoning By-laws and Subdivision Rules and Regulations and will apply to all future projects requiring Site Plan Review or Planning Board Approval.

The Guidebook is available on the [Planning Department's web site in Adobe Acrobat \(PDF\) format](#) also printed and CD copies are available in the Planning and Community Development office at 355 East Central Street. If you have any questions or comments about the Guidebook, please contact me at (508) 520-4908 or.

Sincerely,

Daniel Ben-Yisrael,
Director of Planning and community Development

What YOU Should Know About the Franklin Best Development Practices Guidebook
A Fact Sheet Provided by the Town of Franklin

What is the BDP Guidebook?

The Franklin Best Development Practices Guidebook (BDP Guidebook) is a set of guidelines for developers, designers and project reviewers intended to improve the quality of development in Franklin. The Guidebook describes the required and preferred design and construction practices in Franklin related to stormwater management, site planning, erosion control, and landscape design. Certain site planning practices discussed below that would require changes to the Town's existing regulations will be implemented separately from the Guidebook.

None of the practices in the Guidebook are new, and many have already been used extensively in Massachusetts. The Guidebook codifies these practices as official Town policy, thus taking some of the "guesswork" out of project design and review. The Guidebook also provides a single-source reference book for designers and reviewers working in Franklin. Recognizing that many best development practices are site-dependent, the Guidebook identifies a range of practices that are relevant to development and redevelopment projects on a variety of sites.

Stormwater Management

In an effort to meet EPA Phase II Stormwater Management guidelines, the Town's preference is for natural and vegetated stormwater management systems such as swales, constructed wetlands, and bioretention cells. These systems provide groundwater infiltration while attenuating pollutant loads and peak runoff volumes. **Vegetated swales and filters** are relatively narrow strips of grass or native vegetation that receive surface runoff, provide some infiltration and sediment removal, and deliver runoff to a receiving natural or constructed body of water. Swales and filters are designed to receive sheet flow from curbless roadways and parking lots. **Constructed wetlands** are receiving areas for stormwater runoff that are vegetated specifically for pollutant uptake and removal. **Bioretention cells** are vegetated upland areas with pervious soils intended to infiltrate stormwater and remove sediment. In addition to these natural and vegetation systems, the draft Guidebook describes a range of more traditional structural systems such as catch basins and retention ponds. However, the applicant will need to demonstrate that natural/vegetated systems are not feasible if they wish to use such structural solutions.

In large commercial and industrial developments, applicants will be encouraged to reduce the volume of stormwater runoff on their site. This can be accomplished through the use of **pervious paving surfaces** in low-traffic parking areas (such as overflow parking lots). **Roof gardens** on the flat rooftops of commercial buildings are an optional practice to further reduce runoff and increase the building's energy efficiency.

Site Planning

Best site planning practices minimize impervious surface, alteration of natural vegetation and topography, and unnecessary development expenses. Subdivision roads should be designed for their functional classification. For most residential streets, this means **narrower pavement width** and a slower design speed that can incorporate tighter curves and steeper grades, if necessary, to **follow the natural topography**. Natural vegetation or community open space should be provided in the middle of cul-de-sacs. **Trails or stonedust paths** are encouraged as an alternative to paved sidewalks in most situations. Where hydrological conditions allow, **curbs and catch basins should be eliminated** in favor of swales.

A **four-step site planning process** is proposed in order to maximize the retention of critical natural features and create a more constructive development review procedure. Under this process, the applicant first prepares an "environmental constraints and opportunities plan" for an initial Planning Board meeting. At this meeting, the applicant and the Planning Board identify those portions of the site that should be conserved (e.g., wetlands, viewsheds, specimen trees, historic sites), and those that are suitable for development. This analysis should consider natural and visual features, as well as the site's orientation with respect to the sun and wind. With this input, the designer then identifies building sites and lays out the internal circulation network. The last step is to draw in the lot lines, if any. The Town recently adopted a similar four-step process as part of its Senior Village Overlay District bylaw.

Erosion and Sedimentation Control

The most important erosion control practice is to **minimize clearing and regrading**, as discussed above under "site planning." The draft Guidebook also identifies construction-period practices that must be used to reduce erosion and sedimentation. Clearing should be done in **phases** to minimize the amount of bare ground at any one time, and inactive work sites shall be covered with **erosion control fabrics** or seeded. Clearing should be timed to minimize bare ground during the spring, when it is most prone to erosion. Silt containment measures such as hay bales, **silt**

fences, and **silt sacks** will generally be required in both wetlands and uplands.

Landscape Design

On greenfield sites, the most important aspect of the Guidebook's landscape design guidelines is to minimize the disturbance and clearing of natural vegetation. Typically, this will mean preserving some portion of the site as open space, plus **reducing the area of lawn** and garden in favor of **native vegetation**. Because Franklin currently suffers from a seasonal water supply shortage, due in large part to lawn and garden watering, planted species should generally be **drought-tolerant**. Alternatives to build-in irrigation systems such as **drip irrigation** will be encouraged. Designers are encouraged to select plant species that are native to Franklin or provide habitat for native wildlife; invasive exotic species may not be used. The Guidebook will include lists of encouraged and prohibited plant species that meet these objectives. Large, specimen trees on site should be preserved and incorporated into the site design by using **tree wells** or other tree preservation techniques. Finally, retained and planted vegetation should be designed to maximize heating and cooling efficiency by shielding buildings from summer sun and winter winds.

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"An investment in knowledge pays the best interest." - Benjamin Franklin

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